

## **AGENDA ITEM #3**

### **Consideration of request to name the “Lawrence Tract” in Starke County in honor of Dick Blythe, Chairman of the Grand Kankakee Marsh Restoration Project Steering Committee**

The Division of Fish and Wildlife is requesting to name the 200 acre IDNR-owned “Lawrence tract” in Starke County, purchased recently with funds from the North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) and the Indiana DNR, after Dick Blythe, Chairman of the Indiana Grand Kankakee Marsh Restoration Project (IGKMRP) steering committee. As a long-time conservationist and owner of Blythe’s Sporting Goods in northwest Indiana, Blythe has made significant contributions to the wetland and waterfowl resources of the northwest Indiana region. His knowledge of and affiliation with many individuals and organizations who care about wetlands, and his dedication to increasing awareness and funding for habitat projects, has uniquely qualified him to act as a catalyst for the protection and restoration of northwest Indiana’s wetland resources. He was instrumental in the effort to create the IGKMRP, which has been a successful wildlife habitat restoration effort under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP), and he has served in a voluntary capacity as Chairman since the IGKMRP began in 1994.

Through Blythe’s leadership, the IGKMRP Steering Committee established a goal at the outset of the project to acquire, restore, or enhance a total of 26,500 acres of wetlands and associated uplands within the Kankakee River watershed in northwest Indiana. Less than fifteen years after that initial vision, the IGKMRP has grown to include more than 30 funding partners, including federal, state, and local agencies, private conservation organizations, corporations, and private landowners. These partners have generated a total of more than \$12 million in matching funds which, together with \$3.5 million in NAWCA grant funds, have been used to acquire, restore, or enhance more than 18,400 acres of wetlands and associated uplands within the Kankakee River watershed.

In light of Dick Blythe’s dedication and hard work toward the conservation of Northwest Indiana’s natural resources, we respectfully request this property be named the “Dick Blythe Wetland Conservation Area”.

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